

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-28. (Canceled).

29. (New) A method of generating a data store comprising:
generating a plurality of records, wherein each record pertains to a respective one of a plurality of users, wherein each record comprises a searchable identifier, and a linkable identifier, wherein a record of a first user includes
a first field for holding data about the first user,
a second field for holding data about at least one second user, obtained from a database of the first user, and
a third field for holding linked data identifying at least one other record,
and
identifying one or more records as linked records, which record includes a linkable identifier of the first user as being linked data for inclusion into the third field.

30. (New) The method of generating a data store according to claim 29 wherein the searchable identifier is a user identifier, and the linkable identifier one or more of user addresses, telephone numbers, or mobile telephone numbers.

31. (New) The method of generating a data store according to claim 29 wherein the database of the first user comprises an address book.

32. (New) The method of generating a data store according to claim 29 further including the step of ascribing a weighting to a linked record.

33. (New) The method of generating a data store system comprising a plurality of records, each record being generated and linked using the method of claim 29 wherein the step of identifying linked records comprises identifying reciprocal links for inclusion in the third field of each record identified as including a linkable identifier to and/or from the other.

34. (New) The method of searching a data store system generated by the method of claim 33 in response to a request from a first user based on a specified searchable identifier, comprising
 searching for the searchable identifier
 in the second and third fields of the record of the first user, and
 in other records, and
 compiling a list of any or all user records which include the searchable identifier.

35. (New) The method of searching a data store system according to claim 34 wherein the step of searching for the searchable identifier comprises searching for the searchable identifier in the other records only if the searchable identifier is not found in the second and third fields of the record of the first user.

36. (New) The method of searching a data store system according to claim 34 wherein the searching step comprises searching for the searchable identifier in all other records, or a pre-specified set of other records.

37. (New) The method of searching a data store system according to claim 36 wherein the searching step comprises searching for the searchable identifier in a pre-specified set of other records which are a pre-specified link distance from the user record of the first user.

38. (New) The method of searching a data store system according to claim 34 the listing step comprises ordering the list in accordance with link distance between a particular record and the record of the first user.

39. (New) The method of searching a data store system according to claim 34 wherein the listing step further comprises ranking the listed records.

40. (New) The method of searching a data store system according to claim 34 further including the step of identifying a record in dependence on its rank, and retrieving information relating to the identified record for presentation to the first user.

41. (New) A data store generation apparatus comprising
record generation means for automatedly generating a plurality of records, wherein each record pertains to a respective one of a plurality of users, wherein each record comprises a searchable identifier, and a linkable identifier, wherein a record of a first user includes

a first field for holding data about the first user,

a second field for holding data about at least one second user, obtained from a database of the first user, and

a third field for holding linking data identifying at least one other record, and,

link identification means for automatedly identifying one or more records as linked records, which record includes a linkable identifier of the first user as being linked data for inclusion into the third field.

42. (New) The data store generation apparatus according to claim 41 wherein the searchable identifier is a user identifier, and the linkable identifier one or more of user addresses, telephone numbers, or mobile telephone numbers.

43. (New) The data store generation apparatus according to claim 41 wherein the database of the first user comprises an address book.

44. (New) The data store generation apparatus according to claim 41 further including weighting means to ascribe a weighting to a linked record.

45. (New) A data store system comprising a plurality of records, each record being generated and linked using the data store generation apparatus of claim 41, wherein the link identification means is arranged in use to identify reciprocal links for inclusion in the third field, of each record identified as including a linkable identifier to and/or from the other.

46. (New) A data store searching apparatus for searching the data store system of claim 45 in response to a request from a first user based on a specified searchable identifier, the apparatus comprising

searching means for searching for the searchable identifier

in the second and third fields of the record of the first user, and
in other records, and

listing means to compile a list of any or all user records which include the searchable identifier.

47. (New) The data store searching apparatus of claim 46 wherein the searching means is arranged in use to search for the searchable identifier in the other records only if the searchable identifier is not found in the second and third fields of the record of the first user.

48. (New) The data store searching apparatus according to claim 46 wherein the searching means is arranged to search for the searchable identifier in all other records, or a pre-specified set of other records.

49. (New) The data store searching apparatus according to claim 48 wherein the searching means is arranged to search for the searchable identifier in a pre-specified set of other records which are a pre-specified link distance from the user record of the first user.

50. (New) The data store searching apparatus according to claim 46 wherein the listing means is arranged in use to order the list in accordance with link distance between a particular record and the record of the first user.

51. (New) The data store searching apparatus according to claim 46 wherein the listing means is further arranged to rank the listed records.

52. (New) The data store searching apparatus according to claim 51 wherein the listing means is arranged to rank each of the listed user records based on at least one of its weighting, its link distance from the record of the first user, or its frequency of occurrence in the list.

53. (New) The data store searching apparatus according to claim 46 further including retrieving means for identifying a record in dependence on its rank, and for retrieving information relating to the identified record for presentation to the first user.

54. (New) The data store searching apparatus according to claim 46 wherein the listing means is arranged to rank each of the listed user records based on at least

SHIPMAN
Appln. No. 10/532,106
March 20, 2008

one of its weighting, its link distance from the record of the first user, or its frequency of occurrence in the list.